



A MEDIEVAL TOMB IN TARTU CATHEDRAL

MARTIN MALVE and RAIDO ROOG

Tartu Ülikool, Ajaloo ja arheoloogia instituut, Arheoloogia osakond (University of Tartu, Institute of History and Archaeology, Department of Archaeology), Jakobi 2, 51014 Tartu, Estonia; martinmalve@gmail.com

MIHKEL MÄESALU

Tartu Ülikool, Ajaloo ja arheoloogia instituut, Üldajaloo osakond (University of Tartu, Institute of History and Archaeology, Department of General History), Lossi 3, 51003 Tartu, Estonia

INTRODUCTION

A 3×2.15 m pit was excavated in the former Tartu Cathedral, currently University of Tartu History Museum, in order to exhibit a medieval grave slab found during fieldwork in 2008 (Malve & Valk 2009, 141–150). From the pit, located in easternmost bay of the southern aisle, just in front of the choir, a brick construction was discovered from the depth of *ca.* 0.6 m. It appeared to be a medieval tomb, which was investigated and later exhibited together with the grave slab. The article presents the results of the excavations and osteological analysis and discusses the information from written sources regarding burials and grave-looting in Tartu Cathedral.

THE TOMB

A rectangular tomb (Figs 1, 2), with *ca.* 0.85×1.92 m inner dimensions and *ca.* 1.5×2.6 m outer dimensions, was unearthed. Its 35 cm thick walls were preserved to the height of 0.6–1 m, their topmost part was missing along with the grave slab. The tomb was *ca.* 6° offset from the longitudinal axis of the church (Fig. 1). Old walls or a big rock could be the cause for this shift of direction. The bottom of the tomb lay *ca.* 1.8 m deep from the modern floor-level.

The tomb was built of bricks of the size $31 \times 15.4 \times 9.7$ cm joined with lime mortar. Along decent bricks some brittle, slightly fired or unfired ones were used. Sporadic traces of plaster could be distinguished on the inner sides of the lower part of the walls, which led to the conclusion, that the inside of the tomb had been plastered. It is difficult to say when the tomb was constructed and it is unclear if it was built especially for the person inside or if it was used repeatedly. Mixed human bones on and around the tomb indicate that earlier burials were removed while digging the grave. Coins found in the backfill of tomb, the latest from the first quarter of the 16th century¹, refer to the time of the final burial.

One can confidently assert, according to current state of research, that the Tartu Cathedral was not completely full of tombs like St. John's church in Tartu (Alttõa 2011, 69, fig. 116). Earlier only two tombs (Fig. 1), both in the choir of the church,

¹ TM A-207: 26, 28.

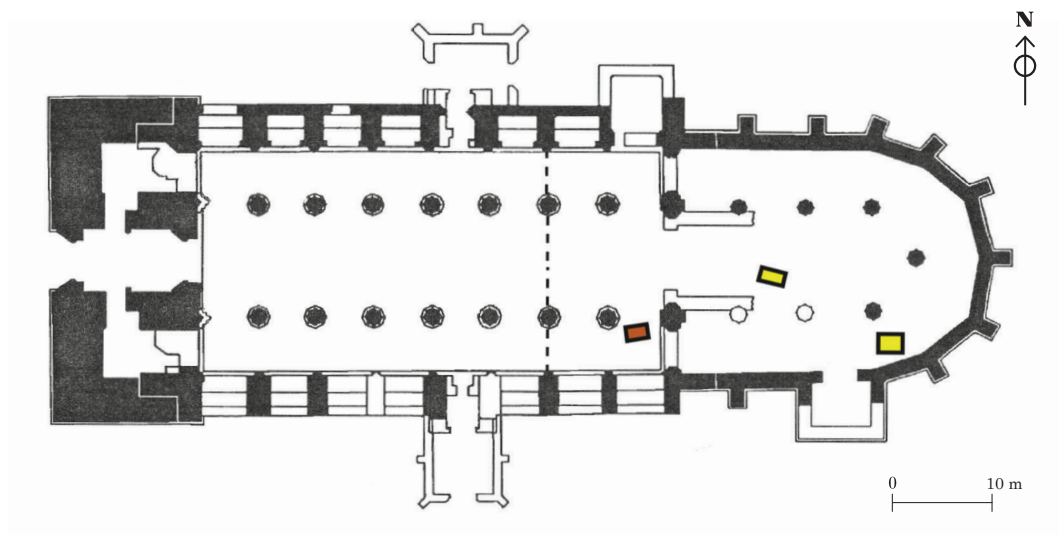


Fig. 1. Tombs found in Tartu Cathedral: in 2013 (brown) and earlier (yellow).

Jn 1. Tartu toomkirikust leitud hauakastid: 2013. a leitud (pruun) ja varasemad (kollased).

Drawing / Joonis: Raido Roog



Fig. 2. The upper part of the tomb after the removal of the debris.

Jn 2. Hauakasti ülaosa pärast rusu eemaldamist.

Photo / Foto: Raido Roog



Fig. 3. Male skeleton in the tomb.

Jn 3. Haudakastist leitud mehe luustik.

Photo / Foto: Raido Roog

have been discovered (Prints 1963, 18; Tiirmaa 1982, fig. 9) (Fig. 2). It seems that in Tartu Cathedral one usually commissioned only a grave slab (Malve & Valk 2009, 145–147).

BURIAL INSIDE THE TOMB

A complete skeleton was found (Fig. 3). The deceased lay in the depth of 1.6 m from the current floor level. The body was on its back in a stretched position. The arms were placed on the stomach, his right palm on his left pelvis and his left palm on the right lower part of his chest. His head was straight and tilted to the chest. Decayed wood and coffin nails were preserved from the coffin. No objects were found with the deceased. With the removal of burial no. 1 an earlier burial (burial no. 2), disrupted by the building of the tomb, was discovered.

The human remains

In case of the fully articulated skeleton (burial no. 1), the sex of the burial was determined according to the morphological traits on the pelvis and cranium (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994, 16–20) and the maximum length of the long bones (Garmus & Jankauskas 1993, 6–8). The age at death was determined according to the changes in pubic symphyseal face (Todd

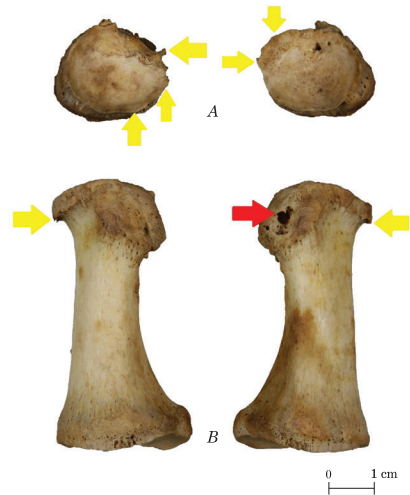


Fig. 4. Probable signs of chronic gout on the joints of great toe: first proximal phalanges with osteophytes (A) and first right metatarsal with scooped-out lesion on the medial surface of the head (B).

Jn 4. Võimaliku kroonilise podagra tunnused suure varba liigestel – esimesed varbalülid luukasvistega (A) ja esimene parem põialuu, mille peaosa mediaalsel pinnal on põletikust tekkinud lohk (B).

Photo / Foto: Raido Roog

1920, 285–334). It belonged to a middle-aged (40–50-year-old) man. Osteological analysis revealed bone changes between the joints of the proximal phalanges of the first toes and the first metatarsal bones (Fig. 4: A, B). Both first metatarsophalangeal joints showed heavy wearing and osteophytes around the joint margins. The head of the first left metatarsal had a scooped-out lesion on the medial surface (2–3 mm in diameter) (Fig. 4: B). These signs are characteristic to chronic gout (Roberts & Manchester 2012, 161–163).

Gout (*Arthritis uratica*) is an inflammation disease that is related to disorder of uric acid metabolism (Brikenfeldt 2000, 219–225). Gout is caused by high levels of uric acid in blood, due to which uric acid starts to accumulate in human tissue, e.g. joint cavity. These deposited crystals bring upon inflammation and cause oedema, erythema and pain on the area of the joint. As the disease progresses, it leads to the destruction of bone in the joints, most commonly in the metatarsophalangeal joint of the great toe. Gout usually occurs in the age of 40–50 years (*ibid.*).

Gout is associated with excessive intake of alcohol (e.g. beer, wine), some animal (e.g. sheep meat, liver) and fish (e.g. cod, herring) diet. Due to it, gout has been called a disease of opulence and a disease of kings. Dehydration, hypertension and stress situations are additional risk factors. The lifestyle and dietary habits of the man in question could be the cause of his disease. A sample was taken from his finger bone for stable isotope analyses to estimate his dietary habits.² Preliminary results showed that his diet consisted mostly of animal and fish products. The man's menu differed remarkably from the people of the lower town (Samples were taken from the burials in St Mary's churchyard and St George's churchyard in Tartu), who had a more mixed diet.

Burial no. 2 belonged to a 11–18-year-old individual and it was left intact. Age was determined according to epiphyseal union (Schaefer *et al.* 2009).

THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE BURIED

The cathedral was the burial place of the clerical elite of the bishopric. Secular people were buried there only when they were founders – had financed the building or restoring of the cathedral, constructed a chapel or founded a vicariate – and even then usually in adjacent areas (chapels, narthex etc.) not in the nave or the choir (Agenti & Gilchrist 2011, 501–503; Wulf 2000, 245–246). Every cathedral had its own customs. For example only bishops and canons were buried in the nave and choir in the Hildesheim Cathedral (Wulf 2000, 246, Planbeilage 2). Dozens of skeletons (Haak 2002, 110–120; Malve & Valk 2009, 141–150; Malve & Roog 2014) and a remarkable amount of mixed human bones have been found in Tartu Cathedral, which point to the density of burial inside the church in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Period. Although grave slabs of bishops, canons, priest-vicars and vassals have been found, their original location is in most cases unknown (Valk 1995, 67, 76). Since the tomb under discussion was located in the southern aisle near the choir, the person buried there was most probably a cleric of high rank. Ten medieval coins (Table 1) and pieces of brocade³, found during excavations, could hint to the proximity of an altar, further indicating the desirability of this burial place.

² Only preliminary results are given in this paper, because not all samples have been received from the laboratory.

170 ³TMA-207: 70–74.

Table 1. Coins found in the pit for the grave-slab.

Tabel 1. Hauaplaadi süvendist leitud mündid.

Identified by / Määramud: Mauri Kiudsoo (AI)

No. /nr	Find No. /Leiunr	Coin /Münt
1	20	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Johan I Vyffhusen (1343–1373), <i>pfennig</i>
2	21	Bracteate, North Germany, Hamburg, second half of the 14th century, <i>pfennig</i>
3	22	Bracteate, Denmark, Tallinn, ca. 1265–1332, <i>pfennig</i>
4	23	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Dietrich III Damerow (1379–1400), <i>pfennig</i>
5	24	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Johan I Vyffhusen (1343–1373), <i>pfennig</i>
6	25	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Dietrich III Damerow (1379–1400), <i>pfennig</i>
7	26	Livonian Order, Walter von Plettenberg, Tallinn, (1532–1534), <i>pfennig</i>
8	27	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Johan I Vyffhusen (1343–1373), <i>pfennig</i>
9	28	Tartu bishopric, Johannes V Blankenfeld (1518–1527), <i>pfennig</i>
10	29	Bracteate, Tartu bishopric, Dietrich III Damerow (1379–1400), <i>pfennig</i>

THE QUESTION OF GRAVE-ROBBERY

IN THE CATHEDRAL DURING THE LIVONIAN WAR (1558–1583)

The fact that the tomb is untouched leads one to question the firm belief that all graves in Tartu Cathedral were dug up when the town was under Russian lordship in 1558–1582. According to the chronicle of Balthasar Russow (published in 1578) some residents of the town hid valuables under grave slabs in churches in the summer of 1558, when Russian troops were besieging the town. After the city surrendered, Russian troops are said to have searched all graves through, turned all grave slabs over and found everything hidden (Russow 1853, 56). Russow's story should be considered as slandering of the enemy. No other contemporary written sources mention grave-robbery in connection with these events. The surrender of the town and the establishment of Russian lordship actually went without notable incidents (Laidre 2008, 108–118; Hausmann 1900, 194–200).

When the town of Narva was taken by Russian troops in spring 1558, all the tombs in its churches were opened, the cadavers inside removed and the tombs re-filled with earth. Russian priests were said, by German burghers who witnessed these events, to have done so in order 'to consecrate the churches in their own way' ('... also Auff ire art, die kirchenn weihenn lassen...', Bienemann 1865, 251). The activities of Russian priests in Narva were somewhat exceptional, for a German burgher was said to have tried to burn an Orthodox icon right before the town was taken by the Russians. So the priests purified the town from 'Iconoclasts' (Selart 2008). Usually Russians dug up Latin (Lutherans, Catholics etc.) cadavers either when converting a Latin church into an Orthodox one, or when Latins were buried in Orthodox cemeteries without approval from Orthodox church authorities (Scheidegger 1993, 65–66). No purifying rituals were employed by Russian priests in Tartu after the fall of the town and Tartu Cathedral needed no purification because it continued functioning as a catholic church (Hausmann 1900, 200). There is no info on the Cathedral ever being converted to an Orthodox church. Although oral reports of finds of pieces of Russian-style ceramic grave-slabs from Tartu Cathedral (Valk 1995, 67) point to the possibility, that the cathedral may have been used as a burial place for Russian servitors who had their service estates in the vicinity of Tartu (Selart 2006, 119), it is too vague a basis to claim that the Cathedral was re-converted. Besides, Russians did not have the con-

cept of consecrated earth, which means that if they wanted, they could bury their dead wherever, although preferably far from graves of the Latins, which were considered unclean (Scheidegger 1993, 66–67, 99–100).

The cathedral was in ruins when Tartu was taken over by Polish troops in 1582. All the graves of the bishops were pillaged, their cadavers dug out and pieces of grave-slabs lay on the floor of the cathedral according to hetman Zamoyski and his secretary (Theiner 1856, 336; Hausmann 1900, 205–207). Archaeological excavations have shown that a large part of the floor-tiles and grave slabs had been removed during the time of Russian lordship and may have been used as building materials (Valk 1995, 65–67). One cannot rule out the possibility, that the remains of the Russians buried in the Cathedral were removed, along with their graves-slabs, either when Russian troops left the town in 1582 or after the founding of the orthodox bishopric of Tartu in 1570. Since after the removal of the floor the cathedral continued to be used for burials (Valk 1995, 70–72; Haak 2002, 114–118), the cadavers mentioned in written sources could have been unearthed when new graves were dug. So it seems probable that contemporary Catholics and Lutherans interpreted the breaking of grave-slabs, the removal of the church floor and visible human remains on the ground as grave-robbery.

CONCLUSIONS

A well-preserved medieval tomb made of bricks was found in Tartu Cathedral. The use of material and the style of building give it an air of sloppy workmanship, which could be the reason why its inner sides were plastered. A complete skeleton of a middle-aged man was found in it. The location of the tomb near the choir indicates that it could have been the burial of a high-ranking cleric. During his lifetime the man had suffered from gout, a disease caused by excessive consumption of meat and fish. Preliminary results of the analysis of stabile isotopes also point to the large amount of fish and meat in his menu. The man was most likely buried in the first quarter of the 16th century.

The analysis of written sources leads to serious doubts to whether graves in Tartu cathedral were actually looted during the Livonian war. The chronicles picture the enemy as sacrilegious, often unfoundedly. Other reports of grave-robbery show us how contemporaries interpreted the breaking and removal of grave slabs and the results of digging new graves in the time when the church was no longer in active use.

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KESKAEGNE HAUAKAST TARTU TOOMKIRIKUST*Martin Malve, Mihkel Mäesalu ja Raido Roog*

Tartu toomkiriku pikihoone lõunalööv, kooriruumi ees (jn 1) leiti arheoloogiliste uuringute käigus riskkülikukujuline tellistest hauakast, mille välis- ja sisemõõtmed olid u $1,5 \times 2,6$ m ja u $0,85 \times 1,92$ m. Seinad olid 35 cm paksused. Kasti ülemine osa oli lõhutud, hauaplaat puudus. Kiriku pikitelje suhtes oli kast nihkes (jn 1). Kast oli laotud $31 \times 15,4 \times 9,7$ cm tellistest, mida sidus lubimört. Lisaks korralikele tellistele oli kasutatud rabadaid, nõrgalt põletatud või põletamata telliseid. Kamber oli seestpoolt üle krohvitud ja selle ehitusega on keeruline määrata. Pole selge, kas see rajati hauakastist leitud mehele või kasutati seda korduvalt. Kirstu peal ja ümber olnud segatud inimluud viitavad, et haua kaevamisel on varasemad matused eemaldatud. Viimase matuse vanust aitavad täpsustada hauakastist leitud mündid, millest hilisemad pärinevad 16. sajandi esimesest veerandist.

Hauakastist puhatati välja 40–50-aastase mehe matus (jn 3). Osteoloogilise analüüsi käigus tuvastati huvitavad luulised muutused esimeste põialuude ja esimese varba lähimate varbalülide vahelisel liigesel (jn 4: A, B). Paremal esimesel põialuul oli mediaalsel küljel liigese servas näha luu erosioonist tekkinud lohku (jn 4: B). Leitud tunnused on omased kroonilisele podagrale, mis on kusihaiguse vahetuse häirega seotud põletikuline haigus. Podagra esinemine ja stabiilsete isotoopide uurimise esialgsed tulemused viitavad oht-rale liha, kala ja alkoholi tarbimisele. Mehe elustiil ja söögiharjumused annavad tunnistust tema kõrgest sotsiaalsest staatusest.

Toomkirik oli vaimuliku eliidi matusepaik. Kokku on seal välja kaevatud kümneid luustikke ja hulganisti segatud inimluud, mis viitab suurele matmistihedusele kirikus. Leitud on piiskoppide, toomhärade, vikaar-preestrite ja vasallide hauaplaate, kuid vaid kolm hauakasti (jn 1). Kuna käsitletav matus paikneb lõunalööv, kooriruumi lähedal, on suure tõenäosusega tegemist kõrgvaimulikuga. Kaevamistel leiti täitpinnasest kümme keskaegset münti (vt tabel 1) ja brokaaditükke – nähtavasti viide kusagil läheduses asunud altarile, mis osutab matusepaiga ihaldusväärsele.

Tõsiasi, et hauakast on jäänud puutumata, seab kahtluse alla hauarüüste ulatuse Liivi sõja ajal. Balt-hasar Russowi järgi peitsid linnaelanikud 1558. aasta suvel, kui Vene väed Tartut piirasid, oma vara kirikutesse hauakivide alla. Linna alistumise järel olevat vene sõdurid kõik hauad lahti kaevanud. Tema detailidest hoiduvatesse väidetes peab suhtuma ettevaatlikult, kuna ükski kaasaegne allikas ei maini hauarüüstet seoses Tartu alistumisega. Kui Poola väed 1582. aastal Tartu linna üle võtsid, leidsid nad eest varemetes toomkiriku. Piiskoppide hauad olevat olnud rüüstatud, nende maised jäänused väljakaevatud ja hauaplaatide tükid põrandal laiali. Ometigi oleks ekslik arvata, et Tartu toomkirikus sooritati seesugune “puhastusriitus” – kõigi haudade lahti kaevamine, surnute eemaldamine ja hauakambrite täitmine puhta mullaga – nagu Narva kirikutes 1558. aastal pärast linna vallutamist Vene vägede poolt. Kirjalike allikate analüüsi põhjal võib väita, et allikates mainitud hauarüüste ei tähendanud kõigi haudade lahti kaevamist. Esiteks süüdistasid kroonikud vaenlast erinevates pühaduserüvetustes, sageli alusetult. Teisalt peegeldus kirjalikes allikates omaaegsete inimeste tõlgendus hauaplaatide ja kiriku põranda eemaldamisest ja lõhkumisest ning uute haudade kaevamisest ajal, mil toomkirik oli vaenlase valduses. Niisiis ei ole põhjust eeldada, et kõik Tartu toomkiriku hauad oleksid Liivimaa sõdade ajal lahti kaevatud.